

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8305

S E C R E T ROME 2977

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT IT

SUBJ: ANDREOTTI VISIT AND ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY CONFIDENCE

REF: ROME 2908; ROME 2947

1. PARLIAMENT HAS NOW ADJOURNED UNTIL MAY 2, AFTER SUCCESSFUL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO CHALLENGE REPORTED REFTELS.

2. CONVERGENCE OF LEFT- WING INTERESTS FORCED TEST OF STRENGTH ON ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT DESPITE LOW POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LEGISLATIVE ISSUE, AS REPORTED REFTELS. TIMING WAS LINKED MORE TO EASTER RECESS AND IMMINENCE OF DC JUNE 6-10 CONGRESS THAN TO ANDREOTTI WASHINGTON VISIT, BUT ENEMIES IN OPPOSITION AND ELSEWHERE WOULD HAVE WELCOMED ANY EMBARRASSMENT TO ANDREOTTI ON EVE OF VISIT.

3. OPPOSITION WAS MOTIVATED BY CONTINUING NEED TO SHOW, IF POSSIBLE, THAT CENTER FORMULA CANNOT GOVERN OVER LONG HAUL. NEED TO MAKE POINT BEFORE DC CONGRESS GAVE SENSE OF URGENCY TO OPPOSITION, AS PARLIAMENT WILL NOT RECONVENE UNTIL MAY 2, ONLY FIVE WEEKS BEFORE DC CONGRESS OPENS.

4. OPPOSITION SENSE OF URGENCY WAS PARALLELED, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES INCLUDING ANDREOTTI'S DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR CAGIATI, BY GROWING DC LEFT- WING REALIZATION THAT IT IS LOSING GROUND IN LOCAL CONTESTS FOR DELEGATES TO JUNE 6-10 CONGRESS.

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LEFT- WING READINESS TO SABOTAGE GOVERNMENT WAS ENHANCED BY LIKELIHOOD THAT CRISIS WOULD POSTPONE CONGRESS AND ALSO CREATE CONDITIONS IN WHICH LEFT- WING THESE OF " CENTRALITY" INADEQUACY WOULD BE MORE CREDIBLE TO GRASS ROOTS.

5. IMPECCABLE SOURCES CLOSE TO ANDREOTTI TELL US HE WAS ANNOYED AND INITIALLY DISCOURAGED BY " SNIPER" SUCCESS IN PUTTING THE GOVERNMENT IN MINORITY, IN WHAT APPEARED CLEAR ATTEMPT EMBARRASS HIM ON EVE OF VISIT. HIS REACTION, HOWEVER, SHOWED CHARACTER- ISTIC CALM AND DETERMINATION. PSDI AND PLI HAD EARLIER URGED CONSIDERED USE OF CONFIDENCE VOTES, NOT ONLY TO AVOID RISKY SECRET BALLOTS, BUT ALSO TO CHALLENGE LEFT- WING ALLEGATIONS OF CENTER GOVERNMENT DEPENDENCE ON SECRET MSI VOTES. ANDREOTTI TOOK QUICK CONTROL WITH CONFIDENCE VOTE TACTIC, COMPLETING PRE- EASTER RECESS LEGISLATIVE WORK IN GOOD ORDER AND IN THE PROCESS FORCING MAJORITY-- PARTICULARLY THE DC LEFT WING-- TO DEMONSTRATE ITS COHESIVENESS AND INDEPENDENCE FROM MSI SUPPORT.

6. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT ATTEMPT TO EMBARRASS ANDREOTTI MISCARRIED. ANDREOTTI' S GROWING IMAGE OF LEADERSHIP AND STAYING POWER WILL BE REINFORCED BY DETERMINATION SHOWN ON THIS ISSUE. ON OTHER HAND LEFT- WING DC AND OTHER DISSENTERS DID NOT FARE SO WELL. EVEN ROME DAILY MESSAGGERO, WHICH SEEMS TO LOOK FORWARD TO NEW CENTER- LEFT, FELT THAT LEFT- WING " SNIPERS" HAD HARDLY COVERED THEMSELVES WITH GLORY BY VOTING AGAINST GOVERN- MENT IN SECRET BALLOTS, AND IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT IN OPEN (CONFIDENCE) VOTE. MESSAGGERO EDITORIAL OF APRIL 13 SAID, " IT WOULD BE MORE HONEST AND COURAGEIOUS, EVEN AT THE RISK OF PARTY DISCIPLINARY REPRISALS, TO PUBLICLY SHOW THEIR DISSENT, IF THEY REALLY BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING A BOTCH OF IT." BEAUDRY

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